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Generations and Social Structures in Socialist Countries: The German Democratic Republic and East Germany in Comparison with North Korea

Michael Hofmann & Bernd Martens*

Abstract: »Generationen und soziale Strukturen in sozialistischen Staaten: Die DDR und Ostdeutschland im Vergleich mit Nordkorea«. In this paper the development of social structures and generations in the GDR is outlined, and it is compared with developments of the "people's republic" of North Korea in three aspects. Firstly, the emergence of a socialist establishment, that means larger social milieus which are apparently loyal to the state, is interpreted as a basis for stabilization in the GDR and in North Korea. Secondly, in the GDR Western oriented alternative milieus and subcultures became important actors during the political upheaval during the end of the 1980s. There is, however, no evidence of comparable intellectual or cultural counter-elites in opposition to the socialist establishment in North Korea. And third, the history of the GDR is distinguished by a sharply declining rate of integration of the younger generations into the socialist system. The last generations of the GDR are labelled with the adjectives "reserved and unadvised." In contrast to the GDR, in North Korea each new generation seems to experience major historic events which had possibly had a constituting generative effect on some age cohorts. Thus, even the famine of the 1990s became a national challenge whose overcoming were laid in the responsibility of everyone, including the young generation. Finally, the conclusions of these differences between the former socialist states (using the example of GDR) and North Korea are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Generations, social structures, social milieus, social history of the German Democratic Republic.

1. Introduction¹

In this paper a historical perspective is unfolded in regard to two aspects: social structure and generation. The development of social structures in the GDR is

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outlined and it is compared with the development in the “people’s democracy” North Korea. Indeed, we are in doubt whether the comparison does really justice to the developments in both countries which have a similar historic background of the emergence of Soviet-type socialism after 1945, even if, although they belong to different cultures. That makes understanding difficult, especially if processes seem to be rather weird in comparison with those in modern globalised societies (Cumings 2015). Therefore, this paper has an exploratory and preliminary status.

When describing the socio-structural and generational developments of countries that emerged under Soviet and Marxist influence in the aftermath of World War II, we find certain similarities and parallels. Similar characteristics of the socialist countries were the emergence of a socialist establishment during an early reconstruction period. In the case of the GDR, the fate of the socialist establishment after the social upheaval in 1989/90 is analysed in terms of social structure. In essence, the social establishment lost its political power during the transformation period, but succeeded in defeating its social positions.

During the decline of the GDR the youth played an important role. It can be argued that the young people, who were trained in the post-war GDR for the setup of socialism and who reached leading positions during the 1950s and 1960s, constituted the only true generation of the GDR. The mental distance of the youth and its opposition towards the social and political institutions grew with each subsequent age cohort. The failure of the state, ultimately visible in 1989/90, can also be described as the disability to actually integrate these subsequent young age cohorts in society.

In reference to a comparative point of view, we describe two age cohorts – the “last generation” of the GDR (Martens 2015) and the people who experienced the great famine in North Korea as child or teenager. The decisive difference between the two groups is the lack of resistance or opposition in North Korea, although seemingly growing conditions for an “unofficial culture” has come into existence.

The article ends with three questions concerning future developments of social structure and generation in the case of North Korea. The preliminary and inquiring character of the conclusions underline once more the exploratory status of this paper.

2. Social Structural Similarities in Socialist Countries and the Socialist Establishment in the GDR

All of the socialist countries which attributed themselves as people’s democracies were marked by an historic break with the former bourgeois or feudal elites, which in turn aided the creation of a “socialist establishment” and left a decisive mark on the social structures of these respective countries. The “peo-

ple's democracies" or "workers' and peasants' states" such as East Germany, officially known as the German Democratic Republic (GDR), or North Korea represent (or represented) societies without any recognisable middle class(es). Instead, in these societies we find the masses, i.e. the workers and peasants, on one side of society, confronted by the socialist establishment on the other.

The following explanations provide a brief look at the social history (or history of the social structure) of the GDR and eastern Germany:

The Soviet zone of occupation in Germany after World War II did indeed witness radical changes. The old bourgeois and aristocratic functional elites (businessmen, politicians, bankers, military brass, many scientists, etc.) either fled from Soviet occupation or were de-Nazified, expropriated, and expelled from the country. During a tremendous mass educational campaign lasting from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, a new generation of teachers, technicians and managers as well as leading administrators, security staff and political functionaries were trained. The early removal of educational barriers and the resulting mass-scale advancement into positions of social status and political power established social lifeworlds in the higher social echelons of the GDR defined by loyalty to the state and the party – this pertained to about 20% of the population, what we term "the socialist establishment."

There were essentially three possible paths to ascend into this establishment:

First, there was political advancement, which can be seen when looking at functionaries staffing the organs of power (state officials, military and security personnel etc.). Those cadres formed the status and career oriented milieu. The main goal in the lives of these people consisted in climbing the social and career ladder to top and mid-level leadership positions and gaining high social status and power. Party and state functionaries, the administrators of state power, primarily attended so-called 'Party schools' to study socialist law, military, Marxism-Leninism, or political economy.

The second path of advancement was restricted to the economic system. The managers and administrators of nationalized industry (plant managers, engineers, technicians) formed the rationalistic-technocratic milieu. The main goal in the lives of these people was making and shaping products, advancing processes, and being efficient. The managerial elite in the GDR had a strong educational background in engineering. The directors of socialist industry had usually studied technical subjects, engineering, and later went through advanced education in socialist economics.

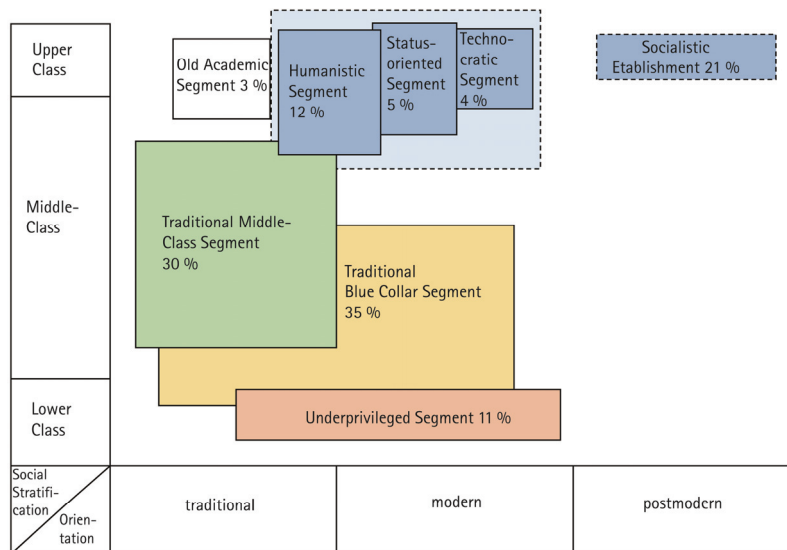
Thirdly, the state exhibited a large demand for socialist culture and education, that is to say, creative artists, university professors, and academic staff who, with intents of enlightening the population, became advocates of (socialist) culture and education. Those cadres formed the humanistic milieu. The main goal in the lives of these people was the fulfilment of duties and social involvement geared towards maintaining and passing on humanistic traditions. This area provided

advancement opportunities for people who have studied social sciences and the humanities, education, journalism or art and cultural studies.

The three social milieus evolved in the first 15 years of the GDR's existence and only comprised one fifth of the population overall. The socialist establishment showed gratitude to the state for enabling social advancement by education and exercises and high degrees of loyalty towards the socialist system. The loyalty of its functionaries provided one foundation for the country's social stability.

The experience of widespread social advancement and the establishment and stabilization of social elites following the war left a strong impression on an entire generation. Researchers conducting generational analysis of East German society (so-called 'generational sociologists') describe this cohort as the reconstruction generation of the GDR (*Aufbaugeneration*, approximately born between 1930 and 1945).

Figure 1: The Social Stratification of the GDR (1960)



Source: Hypothetical Reconstruction of the social structure, © Hofmann.

In contrast, the bulk of the traditional population, i.e. working class milieus and even petty bourgeois lifeworlds, had no choice but to simply coming to terms with the GDR's political conditions. The working class environments, in particular, were preserved in East Germany. Right up to the end of the socialist state, social life was heavily shaped by these traditional proletarian and petty bourgeois ways of life.

Following the conclusion of the socialist educational revolution in the mid-1960s, the socialist establishment began to reproduce itself from within, super-

imposing itself on society in the later years of the GDR like a ‘lead plate’ and especially blocking the social advancement of younger age cohorts what had been during the reconstruction period the shaping experience of the first generation. Social mobility declined sharply within socialist society during the 1970s and 1980s – a process that is not unique to the GDR.

3. New Social Milieus and the Problem of Subcultures

Although the GDR offered its younger generations a good education and a guaranteed level of social security, there existed merely few opportunities for social advancement and participation. This led to the emergence of new social milieus in the 1970s for which the formula of integration via social advancement by education did not hold anymore. Due to international diplomatic recognition and the social welfare policies of Erich Honecker, the GDR’s population was able to enjoy mass consumption, mass tourism, and Western mass and music culture in particular, albeit with numerous limitations and scarcities. Individuals, socialised during this period, were able, even in the GDR, to participate in the ongoing modernisation of lifeworlds.

New social milieus began to emerge in this period, but they were unable to establish themselves in society, for they had low chances to climb up the social ladder of the GDR. Lifestyles, oriented towards music or other subcultures, were therefore less and less in touch with or connected to the GDR: Subcultural milieus came into existence. They either found a niche in which they could cultivate their interests and their music, or they created, often under the auspices of the church, spaces for alternative, reform-oriented engagement within the socio-political framework of the GDR (so-called ‘alternative milieus’).

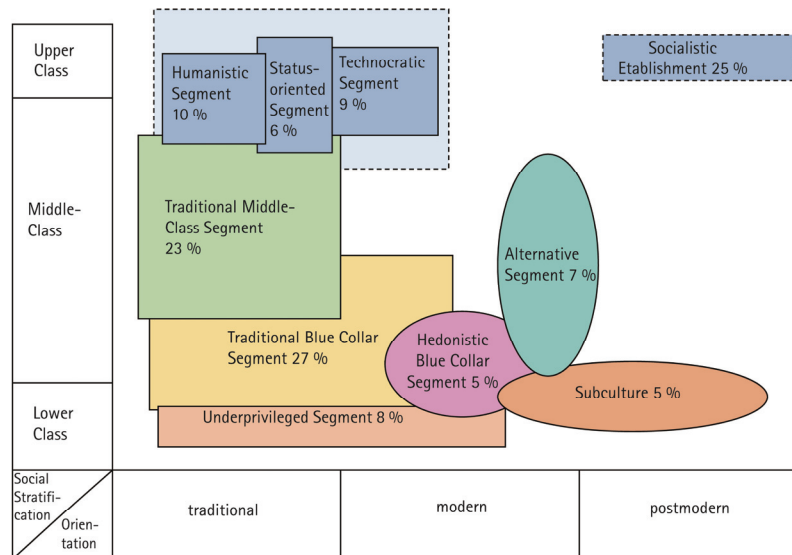
The protagonists of the peaceful revolution in East Germany stemmed from these new social milieus. In this sense, the peaceful revolution exhibited some features of a youth rebellion against the socialist establishment. Young skilled workers (the hedonistic blue collar milieu), for example, were the single largest source of applications for emigration permits during the 1980s, while the young left-alternative milieus could be described as resembling a kind of civil rights movement.

In terms of a generational history, the GDR was only able to successfully integrate the reconstruction generation (*Aufbaugeneration*) into its social structures. This is reflected in the names assigned by generational analysis to subsequent generational cohorts as the ‘generation without boundaries’ or the ‘unadvised generation’ (Wierling 2002; Lindner 2006). The history of the GDR is distinguished by a sharply declining rate of integration for the younger generations.

The SED [Socialist Unity Party of Germany] had from the beginning of their takeover focused on the youth as a carrier of building a new society. But what

initially largely succeeded, got from the mid-1970s more and more into a disaster. The youth was the first age group that the SED could co-opt and it was also the first one which ran 'out of control' (Lindner 2003, 33).

Figure 2: The Social Stratification of the GDR (1989)



Source: Presentation of the social milieus of the GDR (Vester et al. 2001, 50).

As a result of the evident decline of both industry and cities during the 1980s, the traditional milieus of the population began to abandon their previously held loyalty to the system in increasing numbers, and reformers emerged even among members of the socialist establishment itself.

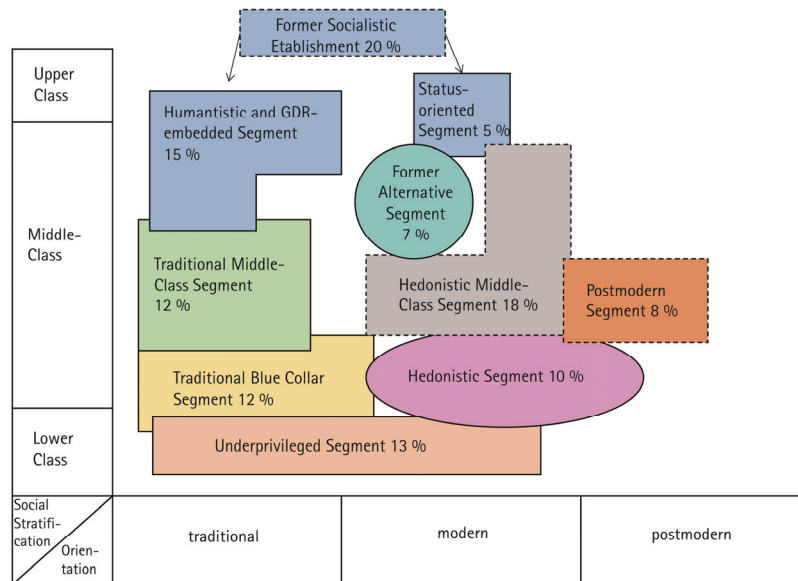
However, the peaceful revolution 1989/90 did not lead to an actual transformation of the social relations of East Germany: The top positions of social stratification remained at the top, the middle classes persisted in the middle, and the bottom of society did not leave the lowest echelons of social structure. In fact, during the years of post-revolution, the social cleavages and inequalities which had already existed in the GDR society only became larger.

The transformation of eastern Germany did indeed lead to an increased level of social mobility; however, this social mobility did not facilitate the social advancement for broader sections of the population. These experiences are the reason why till this day less than half of the East Germans perceive the years since reunification as being a history primarily of gain or improvement.²

² In 2014 Gunnar Winkler asked the question, "Have the years since reunification been [...] for you?" with the following answer options: mainly gain, more gain, gain as well as loss, mostly

A significant factor in this process was the impression that the vast majority of the socialist establishment benefits from the process of German reunification. Despite being excluded from the West German political class, German unification was far more successful in the upper half of society than in the lower half. The socialist establishment succeeded in finding a new reproductive base for itself within the modern service sector. They are highly qualified and already at the disposal of the newly emerging labour market at an early stage.

Figure 3: Social Stratification in East Germany after Transformation (2004)



Source: Ibid., 53.

The numerous functionaries of party politics and social life often managed to secure most of the top jobs in the new emerging insurance, banking and security industries. German reunification worked out best for (or rather for) the higher echelons of East German society. The socialist establishment successfully made the transition into the modern elite of post-socialist society, while the social milieus of the petty bourgeois and skilled workers underwent processes of ongoing shrinkage and social differentiation.

The third significant social force, the new social milieus that had emerged in the GDR since the 1970s, was also unable to achieve social positions resem-

loss, (no indication). In none of the age groups did the items *mainly* and *more gain* receive more than 50 % (Winkler 2015, 43).

bling overall social stabilisation. They went through significant social differentiation. Though a modern middle class did develop in East Germany, it is simultaneously weak and comprises currently only 40% of the population, whereas in the West this figure approaches 60%.

With regard to the topic at hand, the socio-structural results of East German transformation can be summarized in three points:

- 1) Generational succession in the GDR is marked by a sharply declining rate of integration of younger generations in the socialist society.
- 2) During the aftermath of the political upheaval in 1989/90, the former socialist establishment could successfully defeat their elevated social positions, although it was excluded from the ruling political class.
- 3) The middle classes of the social stratification ran during the same time period through social differentiation and modernisation processes. However, especially the deindustrialisation of East Germany and better job chances in the western part of the country caused a significant population exodus in parts of the middle lifeworlds. That will have lasting effects on the East German society in the future.

4. A Comparison of East German and North Korean Generations

4.1 The Notion of Generation

The concept of “generation” is resorted in historical and social sciences to describe age groups in a region who live at the same time and have similar experiences. The background of common experiences and their individual processing lead, in theory, to similar attitudes, values and opinions. Such comparable life images on the base of shared experiences are what generations characterize. A generation does not describe an entire age group or even the majority of it, but especially historians use the term generation to describe features of groups of people in order to provide examples for enabling insight into social and historical processes.

Generations are especially formed in adolescence or in young adulthood. During this phase of life personality is formed. This is an individual process, but embedded in the common background of experience of that generation. From this statement the conclusion can be drawn that the unifying power of historical situations or events, that may have a generation building effect, relates to the extent and the intensity of social episodes and processes. Therefore, drastic historical events such as wars, revolutions or social crises are used in the description of generations, because it is expected that their, perhaps only short-term, effects on younger groups of population are stronger than that of a more continuous social change.

In the following, the hypothesis is pursued that dramatic events may have generation-building effects on certain age cohorts of young people. We combine an age oriented approach with the question whether some indications exist that these group of people actually perceive their social world in some similar way, different to former or later cohorts. The summarizing term ‘generation’ is used to describe these groups. By following this well-established approach often used in historic science, the existence of these generations is not proved, but such working hypothesis is effective in interpreting empirical facts. The two generations in the specified sense are the “last generation” of the GDR (Martens 2015) and a comparable generation of young people in North Korea.

4.2 The Last Generation of the GDR and the North Korean of the “Arduous March”

Several studies analysed the age cohorts of people born in the beginning of the 1970s till the beginning of the 1980s. These people had been socialized in the GDR. They experienced the political upheaval in 1989/90 and the early years of transformation as teenager or as child. Bernd Lindner (2006) suggested a summarizing descriptive term for this age cohort. According to him it is the “unadvised generation.” This term denotes the circumstance that the traditional agents and institutions of education at least partly failed during the early transformation period, because they, themselves, were occupied by dealing with the social and political change. The unadvised generation had only the choice to master “the new by itself” (Lindner 2006, 112). Although this generation was indeed socialized in the GDR, one can assume that its identification with the socialist system was rather low during the 1980s. As the foregoing age cohorts, its dreams and interests were largely Western-oriented. The opening of the border and the unified Germany offered large new opportunities for this generation.

Interviews with men and women of this age group give an impression that, for instance, new courses of academic studies that have been introduced after the political upheaval were perceived as “release from strictly regulated life paths” (Stutz 2006, 142). The need for “self-realization,” a more western influenced ideal for youth times, won a real meaning for this generation. Generally, however, the realization of new opportunities often implied the exodus from East Germany. Long-term panel surveys of people born in 1973 in the GDR show that up until now one quarter of them has migrated to West Germany or abroad, primarily because of poor job opportunities in East Germany. The majority of them does not regret this decision, the degree of satisfaction is higher among emigrants than among those who stayed in East Germany (Berth et al. 2010, 191).

From the temporal distance of more than two decades, four types of common experiences of the unadvised generation during the period after reunification can be identified:

- Firstly, 70% of respondents of the sample of the East German age cohort 1973 were at least once unemployed since the unification. Many of them have had recurrent experiences with times of unemployment.
- Secondly, “double identities” have emerged. Many people of the unadvised generation “feel as Germans [citizens of the unified state], but without giving up their solidarity with the GDR” (Berth et al. 2010, 190).
- Thirdly, this also, has to do with the GDR socialization that “has sustainable long-term effects.” “This especially concerns the former everyday life at the social level” (Berth et al. 2010, 190). Contemporary studies confirm the strong impact of these views of life and narrations also on subsequent age cohorts (Martens 2015).
- Fourthly, current social problems in Germany are often compared with the situation in the GDR, but this does not mean that one wants to install the old system again. These comparisons seem to be an opportunity to criticize and discuss today’s issues in Germany (for example the educational or health policy).

For North Korea a succession of generations is discussed, which certainly have similarities to proposals for the generation structure for the GDR (Table 1):

Table 1: Generations in the German Democratic Republic and in North Korea

GDR	North Korea
Generation of mistrustful patriachs (1895-1910)	Generation of the anti-Japanese struggle (from 1910)
Reconstruction generation (1930-44)	Generation of the Korean War (from 1930)
Integrated generation (1945-59)	Generation of leaders of the cultural revolution (from 1950)
Reserved generation (1960-74)	Generation of the “arduous march” (from 1970)
Unadvised generation (from 1975)	???

Sources: Ahbe and Gries (2011); Lindner (2006); Cho et al. (2014).

In the following we will restrict our attention to age cohorts that were presumably affected by social change in some way similar to the last generation of the GDR. People born around between 1985 and the 1990s witnessed the suffering of the great famine in North Korea, the so called “arduous march,” as a child or adolescent. This age group currently comprises approximately a quarter of the North Korean population. Presumably in 2023, the proportion of people with an age under 40 years will reach about 55% (in 2013 this percentage was 45%, Cho et al. 2014, 19). The importance of younger generations will therefore increase in North Korea.

There is consent in research on North Korea that the “arduous march” represented a deep societal incision in North Korean history. During the period 1995-97, according to unconfirmed sources, up to 2 million people died (Frank 2015, 564), representing about 8% of the population. A severe famine in a

relatively highly industrialized country whose economic growth rates in the late 1950s were probably the highest in the world and its standard of living was up to the 1960s higher than South Korea's (Armstrong 2014, 428) is a historic singularity. Nevertheless, this event fits into a long-term global trend. According to Charles Armstrong (2014, 415), the arduous march depicted the sad North Korean culmination of global developments since the 1970s. "The economic catastrophe of the 1990s was also the crisis of the industrial city in North Korea, and a belated effect of the crisis of industrial modernism throughout the world that begun in the 1970s." The widespread transformation of industrial economy visible by the emergence of "rust belts" of old industrial sites across different countries, and the end of cheap energy were global economic trends, which ultimately contributed also to the dissolution of the socialist system of states and the Soviet Union.

The North Korean political system survived this decline in the early 1990s and the succeeding famine, however. Astonishingly, the societal catastrophe of the "arduous march" even won a socially unifying force during its aftermath, similar to the Great Patriotic War (1941-45) in the Soviet Union. "As further history has shown, 'the spirit of the arduous march' at the height of Great Famine of the late 1990s-early 2000s proved to be one of the most successful propaganda campaigns in the DPRK's history" (Gabroussenko 2014, 3). In accordance with the official North Korean interpretation, the nation had jointly overcome a serious existential crisis and together drew new strength. This official North Korean interpretation is presently the single one, although the "arduous march" (comparable to the Great Patriotic War) can also be interpreted as a partial collapse of state's and party's organisations (Gabroussenko 2014).

Economically, North Korea faced a de-industrialization in the 1990s which could be observed in various transition countries, too, although there are much less dramatic economic implications. The food shortages affected just the old North Korean industrial centres. The agriculture became more important, and markets originally initiated in the early 1990s came more into existence to provide food supply in the aftermath of the famine.

If one tries to classify this historical situation, the "arduous march" is an abrupt event, a profound social disaster that had in particular hit the population of industrialized regions. Its effect on social life and on the individual is only comparable to a war. In contrast to that, the process of marketization denotes a continuous economic and social change. Corresponding to theory, the "arduous march" should have had a generation creating influence, because of its overall effect on society, while the marketization should have rather won an impact on the socialization of young people, for whom various types of markets became part of their usual everyday life.

Consequently, the authors of a recent publication of the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) on "The emergence of a new generation" in North Korea state that the generation forming experience of the "arduous march" was

the collapse of state power (which contradicts the official interpretation of this societal disaster). In this study the age cohorts of a “generation of the arduous march” are younger than that of the previously mentioned proposal of a general generational scheme for North Korea. We will use this suggestion of the KINU in the following, because it provides some comparative opportunities.

The individual and its family could no longer rely on the state’s distribution system, instead they had to be active for themselves (Cho et al. 2014). According to Lee and Kwak (2014, 631), social “survival networks” had fundamentally changed in North Korea before and after the 1990s: Previously, the local party organization, labour relations, management and family had been important. The orientation of social life at the workplace could also be observed in the GDR and other socialist countries. After the “arduous march,” the situation in North Korea entirely changed: Markets, the family, and relatives were now central to survival networks. It seems to be a growing tension between these survival networks and the official interpretation of the great famine that “downplays the role of blood ties and real families,” instead “it presents a collective and a society in the mode of classic good family” (Gabroussenko 2014). It remains an open question how these contradictions are solved within the North Korean society.

At the same time, the famine had hit families very existentially: “The extreme shortage of food during the economic crisis, death and illness of family members, and the participation of women in economic activities, has significantly decreased the stability of family and increased the dissolution of families” (Cho et al. 2014, 20). However, to which extent the individual and family traumas of that time had actually formed a generation, cannot currently be answered, because statements of or studies on the affected individuals are lacking. Additionally, the state succeeded in pushing a heroic interpretation of the arduous march that devaluated individual catastrophes and family ties.

Processes of marketization have been in existence for almost 20 years in North Korea, hence one has to assume that it became a usual socializing environment of a hypothetical generation forming during the “arduous march” as well as later age cohorts. Accordingly, it is assumed in the already mentioned KINU publication that markets are common for these younger populations, not only for basic supply, but for them a “market environment is a space of consumption, a space of communication, a space of sense, and a space of desire”(Cho et al. 2014, 34). At the same time, however, this marketization and a wider variety of information about the world outside apparently are not connected with criticism of the political system or opposition.

Despite the fact they [the young people] become aware of a different world through foreign culture, the acceptance and propensity towards foreign culture do not lead to direct criticisms of the system. This is because the gap between their reality and the foreign world which is conveyed through culture is too large (Cho et al. 2014, 26).

Even among North Korean refugees in China, the approval for the official policy is, according to South Korean surveys, surprisingly high. According to South Korean sources, the agreement to Kim Jong-un's policy reaches 50-60% among North Korean refugees in China (information of South Korean co-operation partners, November 2014). Although it is emphasized that the younger generation is rather apolitical and that it nevertheless feels a gap between the official language rules and its personal daily life (Cho et al. 2014, 24).

Not only markets have meanwhile become part of everyday life of the younger generation, but also the perception and experience with some of its unintended consequences, such as poverty, regional and social inequalities. Such differences would be accepted and used for personal distinction gains, as it is also common in Western societies among young people: "Among the new generation, there exists a differentiation of hierarchy and class through one's cultural taste imitation, and representation" (Cho et al. 2014, 31).

Based on 40 interviews with North Korean refugees born between 1985 and the late 1990s, case studies are created that are summarised to three types of generation affected by the arduous march (Cho et al. 2014, 54):

The first type can be called *social outsiders*. Traumatizing experiences as death of family members were common for this group of people, and these events led to disintegrative tendencies of the families in question. Different types of deviant behaviour of adolescents and young adults can be observed in the sample. This behaviour even includes criminal acts.

Adaptable young people build the second type. They willingly meet the formal social and political requirements of the North Korean society, apparently not only to achieve personal success and benefit, but also because of conviction. The escape from North Korea seems to be in this context as a random event and partially stands in a strange contrast to the previous life of these persons.

The third type seems to be adapted at the first glance, but the North Korean "normality" is in essence solely outward. These adolescents and young adults test various strategies to undermine the officially tolerated behaviour for their personal benefits. Accordingly, this third type represents a *fragile normality* that gives hints for some hidden frictions within the North Korean society.

It is not possible to compute statistical distributions of these types. The study delivers a qualitative exploration of a hypothetical generation effected by the "arduous march" on a quite small empirical base.

Table 2: Comparison of the Unadvised Generation the Generation of the Arduous March

Aspects	Unadvised generation	Generation of the arduous march
Age cohorts	1970-85	Born after 1970, in the KINU study about 1985 till the late 1990s
Generation forming event	The political upheaval of 1989/90 in the GDR	The severe famine in North Korea, 1995-97
Primary effects	Uncertainties, new options	Comprehensive existential crisis, loss of family members and other related persons, signs of social disintegration, probably psychic traumata
Experience previously	Childhood and youth in "socialistic paths" influenced by Western culture and media, partly some kind of "double life", everyday life in the GDR and cultural orientation at the West, family cohesion against political and societal spheres, private niches, but also opposition against the state	Childhood and youth in "socialistic paths", strong separation against foreign influences and information, strong position of official institutions in comparison to family structures
Experiences afterwards	Transformation period, individualization, new freedom and opportunities, but also new social problems, for example unemployment, parents and teachers are seen as weak, "phantom pains" (Lindner 2006,112), because of the suddenly disappeared GDR	Marketization, regional and social inequalities, declining importance of the workplace, of the party and of the administration for coping everyday life, growing impact of markets, families and relatives for survival, at the same partly dissolution of family structures owing to death of relatives, more information about foreign countries, but no indications of a declining loyalty to the political system

Finally we confront the *unadvised generation* with the *generation of the "arduous march"* (Table 2). There are similarities, but the differences outweigh in some decisive topics.

- The "arduous march" was a social disaster whose effects were comparable to a war. In contrast to that, the social upheaval of 1989/90 will have had far less traumatizing effects, especially on families and the youth.
- A long time before the social change actually occurred in the GDR, the country was socially and economically destabilized. Symptoms of these processes were the growing alienation of young people and their cultural orientation to the west. The same cannot be depicted in the case of North Korea. The country instead survived the collapse of the socialist system of states and the catastrophe of the "arduous march" became, according to the recent official interpretation, the unifying heroic test of the nation.

- Partly, processes that can be observed in North Korea after the “arduous march” began in the GDR before the political change of 1989/90: the growing importance of kinship in contrast to administration and party as well as easier access to foreign information and cultural goods.
- The crucial difference – that has also been raised in the part of this paper about social structures – seems to be that new information sources and access to foreign cultures do not visibly undermine the loyalty of younger generations to the state and the political system in North Korea. At the moment it cannot be estimated how fragile this normality is. There is an ongoing discussion in the North Korea research on the stability of the political system. During the last years the point of view has become stronger which, for example, Dae-Sook Suh uttered at a conference in 2014. “North Korea is an underdeveloped, poor, and isolated country, but its political system is resilient and stable” (Suh 2014, 32). In comparative perspective one can add that this resilience denotes a remarkable and decisive contrast to the GDR.

5. Conclusions: Three Questions Arise from the Comparison of the Development in the GDR and North Korea

When comparing the depicted developments to conditions in North Korea, the following questions arise:

1. Can the GDR’s socialist establishment be compared to the *nomenklatura*, the circles of political leadership in North Korea? Does a socialist establishment also exist in North Korea?

In North Korea, primarily the military elites and political functionaries, which originally emerged during the liberation struggle against Japan and again in the course of the Korean War, were engaged in and responsible for reconstruction and the subsequent reconstruction period. These functionaries enjoyed unique political privileges and are given exceptional status as revolutionary leaders to this day.

This military-political establishment was reinforced and expanded by the leaders of the cultural revolution of the 1970s and 1980s. In any case, we can safely assume that North Korean society is not divided into a very small ruling clique on one side and the traditional (people’s) milieus on the other, but rather that North Korean society also comprises larger social milieus which are apparently loyal to the state. These groups can be conceived of as North Korea’s socialist establishment. The scale of this establishment, that is to say the percentage of the population that belongs to the North Korean socialist establishment, has yet to be determined. Nevertheless, this establishment will likely play an important role in any process of Korean re-unification due to its elevated educational and social status.

2. In the GDR, new (alternative) lifeworlds emerged that were strongly connected to and were identified themselves with the Western world's orientations in terms of consumption and social values. These lifeworlds ultimately became important actors during the political upheaval in East Germany. Are there similar lifeworlds oriented towards Western consumption and social values developing in North Korea?

The relative isolation of North Korea from both the Western world as well as from relatives and family members in South Korea makes a shift in values and a revitalisation of the cultural awakening of the 1970s by the citizens of North Korea rather unlikely. The relevant question, then, is whether cultural counter-worlds, alternative thinking or networks of individuals interested in international culture or music were able to develop in North Korea over the past 20 years. Lee and Koo (2015) discuss some conditions for emerging an "unofficial culture" in North Korea in opposition to the domestic official culture. They mention:

- growing values of property and wealth among the population;
- the influence of trade with foreign countries (one can often read in North Korean literature that foreign culture and products are a "scale for good quality" [Lee and Koo 2015, 486]);
- the emergence of young generations that are, for instance, alienated by the failures of state during the "arduous march";
- a decline of official education;
- the increasing use of new media that would find their way to North Korea, although they are officially forbidden;
- the marketization which, for example, produces new not controllable networks between people;
- and growing segregation of society.

But the authors do not confirm that the unofficial culture, which they assume being already in existence, has currently been turned towards a culture of resistance. So far, at least, there has been no evidence of an intellectual counter-elite in opposition to the socialist establishment emerging in North Korea.

When discussing North Korea, it would make sense to ask what long-term effects growing markets and the significantly expanded social strata of merchants and traders will have on the emergence of alternative modes of thinking and autonomous ways of life. It is undecided whether an increasing orientation towards Western standards of consumption will produce growing popular pressure to be permit leaving the country and travelling freely, as happened in the GDR.

3. Finally, we should ask: Will North Korea exhibit a similar decline in the integration of younger generations as was the case in the GDR?

In contrast to the GDR, in North Korea each new generation seems to experience major historic events which had possibly had a constituting generative effect on some age cohorts. Even the famine of the 1990s (which can be attributed, at least in part, to failures of the state) thus became a national chal-

lenge whose overcoming were laid in the responsibility of everyone, including the young generation. As mentioned, some authors suppose the existence of an “unofficial culture” especially among the youth as a prerequisite of possible resistance in the future. Other studies reveal a “fragile normality” among young people who seem to be well adapted to North Korean society, however under this surface “deviant behaviour” contradicts the normality. But there exists a remarkable divergence to the GDR: Up to date, no declining levels of integration of younger age cohorts can be observed in North Korea.

Capitalism had shown in the course of the 20th century its extraordinary characteristic of integrating opposing youth cultures as well as transforming, for example, original subversive underground movements into entertainment business. Currently, it remains open, whether North Korean society will resist the maelstrom of western culture and exhibit the integrative power in regard to younger generations in the future.

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